Torchy the VIIIth Keeps Father Busy

TORCHY AS A PA. By Sewell Ford. Edward J. Clode.

DUMAS wrote three romances around D'Artagnan, his friends and their descendants. Sewell Ford has written eight books about his red headed private secretary Torchy. This does not necessarily mean that Sewell is two and two-thirds a better fiction writer than Alexandre. Our American humorist has worked the vein of gold in Torchy longer.

Torchy as the parent of a small boy is no less resourceful as a private secretary and a social life saver than he was before that event supplied a title for his latest printed adventures. His fund of slangy humor is limitless, his powers of deduction do not wane, his good humor is irresistible. The Volstead law has nowhere furnished so novel or humorous a little comedy as Torchy works out in "Nicky and the Setting Hen." There may be many a soldier's heart which will beat faster on reading "In Deep for Waddy" and others whose memories will have cause for wonder over the same tale. Charitably inclined folk will alternately groan in sympathy and rejoice over the tale of the Gummidges. And housekeepers will wish they had a little Torchy in their homes to aid in keeping a cook. In brief, Torchy as a Pa is a bringer of diversion, a lightener of burdens, an old friend to be welcomed in as the best of company.

Mrs. Viola Brothers Shore, author of "The Heritage, and Other Stories" (Doran), is having produced this fall on Broadway a play of hers called "Happy New Year." She has written several moving picture scenarios and has at home a partly completed novel. But the achievement she seems proudest of is her ability to prove that being a successful author doesn't interfere with making a little daughter's clothes and helping a husband in his business.

Ring Discovers New York

THE BIG TOWN. By Ring W. Lardner. Bobbs-Merrill Company.

WELL, as Henry Seidel Canby would say, another Lochinvar has come up out of the West; meaning that a guy whose native habitat is somewheres the other side of Hoboken has written a book. All the staff reviewers is busy on what the literary editor has nicknamed worthwhile stuff; the free lance bunch from Greenwich Village side-stepped this volume because they ain't seen nothing printed about it yet in the *Dial;* and the office boy has gone to attend Columbia's weekly football defeat. So I suppose I got to review the blame thing.

The author is this Ring W Lardner. The name of the tome is "The Big Town." Maybe it would be giving away the plot to say "The Big Town" is New York, but between you and me I don't mind giving away anything so long's it didn't cost me nothing.

I ain't afraid to go even farther and give away all I know about Ring W. Lardner; which is plenty, because I got my start and expect to see my finish in the Central League, the Southern Michigan and some of them other Class F circuits. That's how I come to get a line on what all them bush league baseball writers around South Bend, Kalamazoo, Evansville and points Middle West say about Ring W. Lardner and his stuff.

"How does he get away with it?" is the census of their opinions. "There ain't nothing to it. All you gotta do is to write 'damn' oncst in a wile, put in a occasional 'hell,' and then go on natural, like a ordinary man would talk. Cinch! Wisht I'd a-thought of it first so's I coulda cleaned up all the jack this bird Lardner is cleaning up."

I Personally, which is what I have adopted as my nom de plume, don't subscribe to this school of thought. Dos Passos, for a example, sprinkled his "3 Soldiers" with "damns" and "hells," but he didn't make nobody laugh unless it was Gene Debs. I Personally am putting "damns" and "hells" in this piece, but I bet if Cyrus Curtis himself should happen to lamp it he wouldn't never think of giving Philly another disaster along with Connie Mack by requesting I Personally to reside in the City of Brotherly Love and support myself in a style I'd like to get accustomed by writing for his *Saturday Evening Post.* No, sir, nobody can write like Ring W. Lardner except Ring W. Lardner. Wile Helen Dam is a efficient aid, she ain't the whole Lardner staff by no means.

For one thing, Ring W. Lardner had the advantage of being born in Niles, Mich. Dottie Storms, who was the daughter of the Niles postmaster at the time, oncst told me that everybody born in Niles, Mich., early acquired a violent temper. She wouldn't tell me why, but I Personally figgered it out. It's because the Michigan Central Railroad is clear to hell and gone from the centre of the burg and the kids gets sore wile they is waiting to grow big enough to walk a mile before they're allowed to go to the depot with the rest of the folks and watch the trains come in.

Ring W. Lardner is good natured enough now-a-days when he isn't crossed. But his early Nilesque violent temper gives him the advantage of making vinegary cracks roll off his typewriter like the ink off a $3 derby come the first rainstorm. For instance in "The Big Town," which is a tract on "How I and the Mrs. go to New York to see Life and get Katie, my sister-in-law, a husband," the first person singular says as follows:

"Well, we was to have immediate possession of the six room furnished apartment on Riverside Drive, so the next morning we checked out of the hotel and swooped up there. The colored boy, who I nicknamed George, helped us up with the wardrobe. The Mrs. had the key and inside of fifteen minutes she'd found it.

"We hadn't no sooner than made our entree into our new home when I knew what ailed the previous tenant. He'd crippled himself stumbling over the furniture. If a stew with the blind staggers had of walked in there in the dark the folks on the floor below would of thought he'd knocked the head pin for a goal.

"'Come across the room,' said the Mrs., 'and look at the view.'

"'I guess I can get there in four downs,' I said, 'but you better have a substitute warming up.'

"'Well,' she says, when I'd finally fell across the last white chalk mark, 'what do you think of it?'

"'It's a damn pretty view,' I says, 'but I've often seen the same view from the top of a bus for a thin dime.'

"Well, they showed me over the whole joint and it did look O. K., but not $4,000 worth. The best thing in the place was a half full bottle of rye in the kitchen that the cripple hadn't gone south with. I did."

But I was telling you some of the insides of Ring W. Lardner's career. He eluded Niles while in the formative stage and got a job on the South Bend, Ind., *Times,* where he stayed until the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* offered him more money. He quit this now defunct sheet when the Chicago *Examiner* offered him more money. It wasn't long until the Chicago *Tribune* offered him more money. God knows why he ever left Chicago for St. Louis, but he did. Probably because the *Sporting News* offered him more money.

An important point in this biography indicative of the man's true nature, as Robert Gordon Anderson would phrase it, is that, after a brief stay in St. Louis, he held a job on a Boston newspaper only from February to October, 1921. Either he didn't go with Boston or Boston didn't go with him. Whichever way, congratulations are in order.

Having once broken into Chicago from South Bend, Lardner tried something really hard—breaking into Chicago from Boston. He brung this about by getting on the Chicago *American.* Then the *Examiner* offered him more money, after which the Chicago *Tribune* offered him more money and kept offering him more money until 1919.

Lardner's violen temper had been inhibited for a long, long time. Then, two years ago, the Bell newspaper syndicate ast him to write out a application letter. Lardner didn't even mention salary.

"All my life," says Ring, as he signed the Bell contract without so much as giving the figgers a double O, "I been listening to guys saying, 'Ring, you ring, will you Ring?' and 'Say, Ring, does that W. in your name stand for Worm?' the whilst they expected me to laugh like I heard something comical. I've flattened out more guys than there is shoeless comrades in Russia for them two remarks, so they don't dare say them any more. But they think 'em. I know if I go to work for anybody by the name of Bell syndicate I'll have plenty of reason to start right down the line again. I'll even move to New York to get this here new excuse for lamming these Ringsters." That's how Lardner come to fight in New York city, the meanwhile maintaining sumptuous training quarters in Great Neck, Long Island.

Lardner is more than a humorist, a mere entertainer. He is a realist. From the common, everyday mortals of his middle West he has evolved an inimitable type that all middle Westerners recognize; a sardonical droll member of the Loyal Order of Moose, who like the historical Irishman thinks he's as good as anybody and a grate dale betther. Bringing this gent to "The Big Town," with his wife, Ella, and her sister, Katie, was an inspiration; an inspiration that has produced one of the year's best pieces of humor—plainly branded "Made in "U. S. A." DUDLEY A. SIDDALL.

Visiting Briton Finds Boston Honor to England

RAMBLES AROUND OLD BOSTON. By Edwin M. Bacon. Little, Brown & Co.

"WE were three—a visiting Englishman, the Artist and Antiquary. The Artist and Antiquary were the gossiping guides; the Englishman the guided. The Englishman would 'do' old Boston exclusively. He had 'done' the blend of Old and New, and now would hark back to the Old and review it in leisurely strolls among its landmarks."

And so we travel through historic Boston—a bugbear to youthful American history students who consider bygone dates and their past significance—and even their present significance—of little importance to them personally, except the day of the history "exam." But reading this book is no task.

"The founders would have their capital town be to New England in its humble way what London was to Old England. So Boston was builded a likeness in miniature to London. This London look and Old England aspect, we remarked, remained to and through the Revolution; and in a shadowy way remains to-day, as our guest would see. It was indeed a natural family likeness, for, as the record shows, Boston from the beginning was the central point of the most thoroughly English community in the New World."

The book takes the reader along this delightful trip by word and picture. The drawings are by Lester G. Hornby. And the text has to be very good indeed to escape the impression that it was written around the pictures. But artist and writer demonstrate individual values and strike a happy harmony at the same time. The word pictures are as clearly designed as the drawings. The reader sees everything as Mr. Bacon saw it. And the lover of line finds an added attraction in the delightful sketches of Mr. Hornby's scattered so freely through the book.

As we travelled about Old Boston—that is, as we read this book—we recalled many half remembered passages of history. And as the old stories are here repeated in connection with points of interest—for those historical incidents made the points of interest—we wondered how we ever dreaded "dry history" in school days.

For instance, though this is literature as well as history, let us quote:

"Court Street was first Prison Lane, from the Market Place to the Prison, a grewsome dungeon, early set up, where now stands the modern City Hall Annex. In its day if harbored pirates and Quakers, and Hawthorne fancied it for the opening scenes of his 'scarlet Letter'."

We find snatches of history, of description, of biography, the story of the Town and Colony House, the Old State House and Faneuil Hall.

"The North End earliest became the most populous part of the Town as well as the first seat of Boston gentility, and about it longest clung the distinctive Old Boston flavor. This flavor remained, indeed, well into the nineteenth century, long after its transformation into the foreign quarter it now essentially is, a little Italy and a good-sized Ghetto, with splashes of Greece, Poland and Russia. Mellow old Bostonians of to-day remember it as the fascinating quarter of the City down to the eighteen sixties, still retaining, intermixed with alien innovations, a faded, shabby genteel aspect and delightsome Old Boston characteristics in its native residents and in its architecture. The old time charm the foreign occupation has not altogether effaced. There still remain the narrow streets and narrower alleys, and most of them have been permitted to retain their colonial or provincial names, as Salutation, Sun, Moon, Chair, Snowhill. Under the foreign veneer we may find a remnant of a Colonial or provincial landmark; or, plastered with foreign signs, the battered front of some provincial worthy's dwelling."

The Paul Revere House.

Here we have a glimpse of Christ Church, of the "Paul Revere House" and Copp's Hill Burying Ground. We are told that "many graves are hopelessly lost, for in the dark days of the neglect of the place, stones were filched from their rightful places and utilized in the construction of chimneys on nearby houses, in building drains, and even for doorsteps. A latter day honest superintendent succeeded, through painstaking research, in recovering quite a number of the filched stones, and reset them in the ground, but with no relation to the graves they originally marked, for that was impossibe."

And so we travelled through Old Boston until the last few words were read:

"As we have found, it (the early Town of Boston) really does not extend from one extreme to the other more than a morning's walk, and few, very few, actual memorials are still to be seen. There yet remain picturesque spots here and there, which make it possible to recall some of the agreeable features of a somewhat later age.

"As we parted, the Englishman, not without emotion, admitted that he had seen and heard many things to confirm a belief with which he had begun our little tours, that the greatness of his race was still as well carried forward in this early home of sedition and rebellion as in the Mother Isle itself."

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"Fanutza," one of the stories included in Konrad Bercovici's "Ghitza and Other Romances of Gypsy Blood," has been chosen by Edward J. O'Brien as the best short story of 1921. Mr. Bercovici is said to be the country's greatest authority on gypsies.

A Roumanian Scott

ROUMANIAN STORIES. Translated by Lucy Byng. John Lane Company.

ROUMANIA was one of the countries which became of world interest when Teuton and Slav fought for her fields of grain. This interest makes timely a collection of Roumanian stories translated by Lucy Byng. The Roumanians are anxious to show that in literature they have achieved. This little volume has two prefaces. One is by her Majesty the Queen of Roumania and the other by Prof. S. Mehedintzi of the University of Bucharest. It is unfortunate that so little is told about the unknown authors. Negruzzi is described as the Roumanian Sir Walter Scott, but he seems more like Maurice Jokai, judging from the specimens of his work. Some of these short stories show a sophisticated mastery of many modern literatures.